Human Rights+: Conceptual Foundations for Addressing Invisible Harm and Harm Attribution Gaps

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Abstract

This document introduces *Human Rights+ (HR+)*, an extended conceptual framework intended to address the limitations of traditional human rights structures in recognizing and responding to emergent forms of harm. Existing human rights instruments—while foundational—are constrained by fixed categorical definitions that cannot fully accommodate dynamic social, digital, and institutional environments. As new contexts produce harms that fall outside established classifications, individuals experience real impacts without corresponding recognition or protection.

To address this, the concept of *Invisible Harm* is proposed. Invisible Harm refers to harms that are substantively experienced but structurally unacknowledged due to institutional blind spots, definitional gaps, or the absence of appropriate evaluative mechanisms. These harms frequently arise in digital systems, displacement scenarios, and areas where sociotechnical conditions exceed the scope of legacy governance.

Building upon this, *Harm Attribution Gaps (HAG)* are defined as the conceptual distance between harm as experienced and harm as formally recognized. HAG highlights systemic failures in interpretation, categorization, and validation, particularly in environments influenced by technology, information asymmetry, or institutional rigidity.

Human Rights+ (HR+) is presented as an extension mechanism rather than a replacement. HR+ acknowledges that human rights are inherently non-exhaustive and must remain capable of structured expansion. HR+ provides a philosophical and conceptual architecture for incorporating new categories of harm, emergent identities, and evolving social conditions while preserving the integrity of the existing human rights base.

The purpose of this abstract is to formally establish authorship of the HR+ framework and its associated constructs—Invisible Harm and Harm Attribution Gaps—and to outline their conceptual relevance for future governance, policy, and rights development. Detailed mechanisms, analytic models, and applied methodologies will be elaborated in subsequent publications.

Keywords: Human Rights+, Invisible Harm, Harm Attribution Gaps, Governance, Digital Harm, Institutional Blind Spots, Rights Extension.